

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Understand computer storage and free space

Storage holds files when power is off. RAM is working memory, a different specification. Drives use GB or TB; usable storage is smaller than advertised capacity.

Windows 11; general storage concepts | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ A Windows computer for the optional check
- ☐ A backup before any later cleanup

1. Separate the storage locations

Your internal drive, a USB drive and a cloud account each have their own capacity. Buying cloud space does not enlarge the computer's physical drive. An online-only file may show a name locally without storing its full contents there.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Check available drive space

Open File Explorer and select This PC. Read the available and total space for your main drive. You can also open Settings > System > Storage for categories. Note the numbers before making any change.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Understand the units

A GB is roughly a billion bytes and a TB roughly a trillion; operating systems and manufacturers may display capacities differently. Photos vary in size, and video often needs more space, so no fixed file count fits every device.

☐ Done this step

4. Review before cleaning

Storage settings can show large files, installed apps and temporary files. Inspect any suggested cleanup and keep important originals. Emptying Recycle Bin removes an easy recovery route; deleting unfamiliar system folders can cause problems.

☐ Done this step

5. Plan useful space and backup

Keep room for updates and ordinary work. Verify transferred copies before deleting originals. One external copy is not a complete backup plan. Cloud synchronisation needs its own space and deletion checks.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Write down your drive's total and free space without deleting anything.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Will adding RAM create more room for photos?

No. RAM and file storage serve different purposes. Check the storage drive and photo location when you need more room for files.

Official help and the online guide

Windows drive storage - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/experience/storage-filemanagement/free-up-drive-space-in-windows>

OneDrive online and local files -

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/onedrive/save-disk-space-with-onedrive-files-on-demand-for-windows>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/read-computer-storage/>